

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2019 / ML 2018 Request for Funding



Date: June 01, 2017

Program or Project Title: Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program, Phase 1

Funds Requested: \$5,000,000

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County Locations: Not Listed

Regions in which work will take place:

- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat

Abstract:

Hennepin County and Minnesota Land Trust in partnership with willing landowners, propose to permanently protect 512 acres through conservation easements, and restore and enhance 250 acres of critical habitat. Intense development pressure is a persistent threat to remaining high quality habitat in Hennepin County. This first phase of the Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program will use Hennepin County's recently-adopted conservation easement program to actively pursue protection of priority lands and facilitate habitat restoration and enhancement on new and existing permanently protected lands.

Design and scope of work:

The Twin Cities metro area is rapidly losing critical, high-quality and diverse habitat for migrating waterfowl, canopy-dwelling and grassland birds, game birds, pollinators and other wildlife.

Over the past 15 years Hennepin County in partnership with its cities has used extensive field work and the Minnesota Land Classification System Methodology to assess and inventory every acre of land in the county and document the quality of the associated natural communities. This assessment resulted in the identification of ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors that connect areas of significant habitat across the county. In total, ecologically significant areas and corridors account for about 60,000 acres of land, of which only 31 percent is permanently protected. Using these rich datasets, this program has established focus areas for protection, restoration and enhancement.

The Hennepin County conservation easement program adopted in 2016 established a process for the systematic protection of these focus areas and the remaining forests, prairies, and wetlands associated with them. Over the next 20 years, the county plans to permanently protect 6,000 additional acres. This means that by 2037, 41 percent of the county's best remaining natural areas (24,600 acres) will be permanently protected, totaling just over 6 percent of the total land area in the county. This proposal - phase 1 of the Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program will accomplish 8.5 percent (512 acres) of this long-term objective and will lay a strong

foundation of community outreach that will facilitate an increased pace of protection in future phases as the Program becomes established.

Hennepin County, working in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust, will take a three-pronged approach to land protection that builds on the strengths of the respective partners. In addition to managing the program, Hennepin County will use its connections to the community to cultivate interest among landowners within the highest priority natural resource target areas. The county will work with its 11 watershed organizations and 45 cities to identify easement opportunities and build landowner connections. The Minnesota Land Trust will bring the experience of its land protection and legal team to negotiate the purchase of conservation easements with landowners. An RFP approach similar to what the Land Trust has used in other areas will identify high value protection opportunities and encourage a competitive marketplace for scarce monetary resources. All opportunities for easement acquisition will be scored and ranked based on three factors: ecological significance (quantity and quality of habitat, landscape context), level of threat to the property, and overall cost (funding required by the landowner to complete the project).

Which sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are applicable to this project:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Describe how your program will advance the indicators identified in the plans selected:

The Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program will target protection, restoration, and enhancement of habitat within the county's ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors, 42 percent of which overlap with the state's Wildlife Action Network, as defined in Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025. By targeting activities to these areas of overlap, this program will advance the Wildlife Action Plan's habitat focus.

Ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors are, by definition, the lands of greatest importance to advancing the Outdoor Heritage Fund's 25 Year Funding Framework's indicators. By protecting, restoring, and enhancing this habitat this Program will increase protected acres of key habitat types and priority plant communities (e.g., prairies, oak savanna, Big Woods), increase the average size of core complexes, provide evidence of successful restoration and enhancement projects, and expand corridors connecting protected areas.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Metro / Urban:

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Describe how your program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife as indicated in the LSOHC priorities:

Nearly seventy percent of the best remaining natural areas and corridors in Hennepin County are largely unprotected and susceptible to loss from intense development pressure. This Program will permanently protect, restore, and enhance private land to add to the habitat matrix, create and increase connectivity between already protected habitat, and improve the quality of existing habitat.

Conservation easements have been an underutilized tool in combatting the loss of Hennepin County's best remaining habitat. Several state habitat plans (e.g., Forest for the Future Plan and Aquatic Management Area Plan) identify conservation easements as a critical tool for supporting and growing fish, game, and wildlife populations. Phase 1 of this Program will begin placing permanent conservation easements on some of the State's most threatened habitat and ensuring that the state's most populous County retains a critical connection to the state's iconic flora and fauna. Phase 1 will protect 512 acres of the county's best remaining habitat including prairies, a variety of wetland types (rich and poor fens, tamarack bogs, shallow lakes), and Maple-Basswood and floodplain forests. Additionally, restoration and enhancement techniques will be used to add 250 acres of high quality habitat to the county.

The partners in this proposal have proven to be effective in permanently protecting critical habitat. The state's investment in this partnership will be a sound one, and the state's fish, game, and wildlife will benefit in perpetuity from this work.

Describe how the proposal uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and

complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

Natural resource corridors are open spaces that contain and connect natural areas, lakes, streams, wetlands, and regional parks. They contain some but not all ecologically significant areas, which are forests, prairies and wetlands with primarily native vegetation that have not been significantly altered since European settlement. These are the best remaining and ecologically intact areas in the county and some of the finest habitat of their kind anywhere in the state. These areas include Big Woods forest, wetlands, and native prairie along the slopes of the Minnesota River.

Hennepin County's ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors were established as part of a comprehensive land cover inventory completed in 2008. The inventory populated the DNR's Minnesota Land Cover Classification System dataset for the county. Polygons classified as water, herbaceous, shrubland, or woodland that were field evaluated as being A, B, or C quality were identified as ecologically significant areas. Natural resource corridors were identified by spatial analysis focused on areas with high concentrations of ecologically significant areas, creating connections between ecologically significant areas, and expanding large complexes of high quality habitat.

About 15 percent of the land area in the county - about 60,000 acres - are ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors. Of these, about 41,400 acres are private property that are partially or entirely unprotected. Priority areas for program outreach have been developed using the DNR Rare Feature dataset, the State Wildlife Action Plan's Wildlife Action Network, proximity to protected land, and local knowledge of landowner interest. The highest priority areas will be the more than 11,000 acres that are both identified in the Wildlife Action Network and entirely unprotected.

All easement opportunities (identified through targeted outreach to landowners and via an RFP process) will be evaluated using ecological factors including occurrence of rare features, floristic quality index, quantity of outstanding/high/moderate areas of biodiversity significance, and amount of contiguous border and distance from protected lands.

How does the proposal address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species:

Hennepin County is home to remnants of both Minnesota's Big Woods forest and the western prairies, and was historically dotted by abundant wetlands of many types, more than 50 percent of which have been lost. The great diversity of habitat types and the resulting fish, game, and wildlife species found in Hennepin County presents unique and unparalleled opportunities for protection, restoration, and enhancement. The county's natural resource corridors and ecologically significant areas include remnant old growth Maple-Basswood forest, rich and poor fens, tamarack bogs, oak savannas, shallow lakes, restored prairie, and remnant native prairie, all of which all are critically essential habitat for a variety of wildlife. Wildlife on the federal list of endangered and threatened species that can be found in Hennepin County include the Northern long-eared bat, Monarch butterfly, Higgins eye pearly mussel, and the Rusty-patched bumble bee. Hennepin County is home to 19 rare plants, 27 rare ecosystems, and 61 rare animal species. There are 53 Species in Greatest Conservation Need that would be impacted by this proposal including Blanding's turtle and Trumpeter swans.

Identify indicator species and associated quantities this habitat will typically support:

DNR staff, in consultation with a variety of experts in NGOs and other agencies, have compiled a select group of indicator species and associated quantities. The metrics are derived from existing data sources and/or scientific literature, but are necessarily gross averages. It is important to emphasize that the estimates provided are not accurate at a site-specific scale.

Prairie Indicator:

- Bobolink - The breeding territory size of bobolinks is 1.7 acres in high quality habitat in Wisconsin. If all of the habitat was occupied, a 100 acres of habitat could potentially hold approximately 60 pairs of bobolinks.

Wetland Indicator:

- Trumpeter swans are strictly territorial on their breeding areas with shoreline complexity and food availability being factors in defining the area being defended. Though reported territories can range in size from 1.5 to >100 hectares, a reasonable expectation is that 1 trumpeter swan pair would be supported by each 150 acres of wetlands protected, restored, or enhanced.

Forest Indicator:

- White-tailed deer use a wide variety of forested habitats, are found throughout Minnesota, and are an important game species in the state. In the 33 forested deer permit areas for which deer densities are estimated, covering most of the LSOHC Northern Forest section, the sixty-year average (2010-2015) for pre-fawn deer densities across all deer permit areas is 13 deer per land habitat, or roughly 1 deer (pre-fawning) for every 50 acres of land. On average, densities within the Metropolitan Area are higher than those in the Northern Forest.

Outcomes:

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need *The following metrics will be tracked annually to evaluate the success of the Program: acres protected; acres restored and enhanced; adapted connectivity indices (terrestrial, aquatic, and riparian); and suitability of protected acres for use by species of greatest conservation need.*

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended:

Both partners are experienced land and easement managers and co-holding easements provides another level of assurance that the habitat protected and restored will be sustained using the best standards and practices of conservation easement stewardship.

The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited and insured land trust with a successful stewardship program that includes property monitoring, effective records management, addressing inquiries and interpretations, tracking changes in ownership, investigating potential violations and defending the easement in case of a true violation. Hennepin County successfully holds, co-holds or manages seven conservation easements and 38 RIM easements.

To ensure that the protected resources will be managed to support biological integrity, Habitat Management Plans and Restoration/Enhancement Plans will be developed for each conservation easement and restoration/enhancement project. Hennepin County and the Land Trust are committed to maintaining relationships with project landowners, and securing the technical and financial resources to undertake prescribed activities.

Explain the things you will do in the future to maintain project outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2021 (and in perpetuity)	MLT Stewardship & Enforcement Fund; Hennepin County	Annual monitoring of property in perpetuity (by MLT)	Enforcement as needed (by MLT and Hennepin County)	
2021 (and in perpetuity)	Hennepin County	Annual monitoring of completed restoration project performance standards (by Hennepin County)	Make adaptive management course corrections as needed to meet performance standards	Continue monitoring periodically to ensure restoration objectives are sustained

What is the degree of timing/opportunistic urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

According to Metropolitan Council, open space in Hennepin County is expected to decline by about 62,000 acres by 2030. Additionally, conservation-minded landowners have consistently expressed interest in alternative options for their property when development opportunities arise. However, a dedicated funding stream for conservation easements does not exist, and, until the Hennepin County Board approved the conservation easement program in 2016 a framework did not exist to evaluate easement opportunities. As a result, the county has accumulated an extensive list of missed easement opportunities. Now that an evaluation framework is in place, the county wants to move as quickly to establish easily accessible funds that can be quickly deployed for acquisition of conservation easements. If these critical corridors and natural areas are not protected, they will continue to be fragmented and eliminated through development, resulting in disastrous consequences for the fish, game, and wildlife species that depend on them.

How does this proposal include leverage in funds or other effort to supplement any OHF appropriation:

Hennepin County will provide 1 FTE staff time over the course of the grant: a Natural Resources Specialist (0.4 FTE), the Land and Water Supervisor (0.1 FTE), and an Outreach Specialist (0.5 FTE). The services of the county's survey team will, as well as \$300,000 in cash match toward the long-term stewardship of acquired easements will also be provided.

The Minnesota Land Trust will encourage private landowners to fully or partially donate the value of their conservation easements, thereby receiving less than the appraised value might otherwise allow. This donated value is shown as leveraged funds in the proposal. The Land Trust has a strong track record of incentivizing landowner to participate in this fashion.

Finally, although it is not quantified in this proposal, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association will be engaged as a restoration partners in this program. Both have committed to providing leveraged funds through their services, the amount of which will depend on the specific restoration projects.

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

Describe the relationship of the funds:

Not Listed

Describe the source and amount of non-OHF money spent for this work in the past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2006	LCCMR (for Natural Resources Inventory)	80,000
NA	City of Bloomington, City of Plymouth, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (for Natural Resources Inventory)	160,000
NA	Hennepin County (1 FTE Natural Resources Specialist, 2003-2016)	1,440,000
NA	Hennepin County (stewardship funds for 3 easement co-held with MLT)	54,000
NA	Hennepin County (operating budget for natural resources program 2003-2016)	180,000
NA	Hennepin County, PCA, MDH, Landowner (special project to restore a conservation easement)	180,000

Activity Details

Requirements:

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056 - **Yes**

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **Yes**

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program - **Yes**

Is the activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 - **Yes (Private Land, County/Municipal)**

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

Land Use:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **No**

Will the eased land be open for public use - **No**

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **Yes**

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

Conservation easements established on private lands often have driveways, field roads and trails located on them. These established trails and roads will be permitted in the terms of the conservation easement and can be maintained for personal use, provided that they do not interfere with the conservation value of the property. Creation of new roads or trails or expansion of existing ones is typically not allowed.

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition - **Yes**

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

Existing trails and roads will be identified in the project baseline reports and will be monitored annually as part of the Land Trust's stewardship and enforcement protocols. Maintenance of permitted roads/trails will be the responsibility of the landowner.

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition - **No**

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Acquire conservation easements: 1) identify landowners; 2) negotiate, draft and complete easements; 3.) dedicate funds for stewardship	June 2021
Restore & enhance existing permanently protected areas: 1) select projects; 2) draft restoration plan and performance standards; 3) perform restoration activities; 4) annual monitoring for restoration success; 5) adaptive management and additional restoration activities as needed to meet performance standards	June 2021
Restore & enhance new conservation easements: 1) select projects; 2) draft restoration plan and performance standards; 3) perform restoration activities; 4) annual monitoring for restoration success; 5) adaptive management and additional restoration activities as needed to meet performance standards	June 2023

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$5,000,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$270,000	\$309,000	Hennepin County, Hennepin County, Hennepin County	\$579,000
Contracts	\$748,000	\$0		\$748,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$3,724,000	\$372,000	Landowner Donation	\$4,096,000
Easement Stewardship	\$36,000	\$300,000	Hennepin County	\$336,000
Travel	\$9,000	\$0		\$9,000
Professional Services	\$171,000	\$0		\$171,000
Direct Support Services	\$37,000	\$0		\$37,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$5,000,000	\$981,000		\$5,981,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Natural Resources Specialist	0.40	3.00	\$0	\$146,000	Hennepin County	\$146,000
Land and Water Supervisor	0.10	3.00	\$0	\$28,000	Hennepin County	\$28,000
Outreach Specialist	1.00	3.00	\$135,000	\$135,000	Hennepin County	\$270,000
Conservation Staff, Legal Staff, and Support Staff	0.50	3.00	\$135,000	\$0		\$135,000
Total	2.00	12.00	\$270,000	\$309,000		\$579,000

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$135,000	\$0		\$135,000
Contracts	Minnesota Land Trust	\$78,000	\$0		\$78,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Minnesota Land Trust	\$3,724,000	\$372,000	Landowner Donation	\$4,096,000
Easement Stewardship	Minnesota Land Trust	\$36,000	\$300,000	Hennepin County	\$336,000
Travel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$9,000	\$0		\$9,000
Professional Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$171,000	\$0		\$171,000
Direct Support Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$37,000	\$0		\$37,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	Minnesota Land Trust	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
DNR IDP	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$4,195,000	\$672,000		\$4,867,000

Personnel - Minnesota Land Trust

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Conservation Staff, Legal Staff, and Support Staff	0.50	3.00	\$135,000	\$0		\$135,000
Total	0.50	3.00	\$135,000	\$0		\$135,000

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Hennepin County	\$135,000	\$309,000	Hennepin County, Hennepin County, Hennepin County	\$444,000
Contracts	Hennepin County	\$670,000	\$0		\$670,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0

Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Easement Acquisition	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Easement Stewardship	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Professional Services	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Direct Support Services	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Capital Equipment	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Supplies/Materials	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
DNR IDP	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total		\$805,000	\$309,000	\$1,114,000

Personnel - Hennepin County

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Natural Resources Specialist	0.40	3.00	\$0	\$146,000	Hennepin County	\$146,000
Land and Water Supervisor	0.10	3.00	\$0	\$28,000	Hennepin County	\$28,000
Outreach Specialist	1.00	3.00	\$135,000	\$135,000	Hennepin County	\$270,000
Total	1.50	9.00	\$135,000	\$309,000		\$444,000

Amount of Request: \$5,000,000
Amount of Leverage: \$981,000
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 19.62%
DSS + Personnel: \$307,000
As a % of the total request: 6.14%
Easement Stewardship: \$36,000
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 0.97%

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program:

In a process that was approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, Minnesota Land Trust determined our direct support services rate to include all of the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget, which is similar to the Land Trust's proposed federal indirect rate. We will apply this DNR-approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of direct support services.

Does the amount in the contract line include R/E work?

Yes. Hennepin County will manage \$650,000 worth of restoration and enhancement activities under contracts with restoration partners. Another \$98,000 will be used for the development of habitat management and restoration plans for selected easement acquisition and restoration/enhancement projects.

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental? - No

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging:

None.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Hennepin County Environment and Energy Department operations are funded the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund (money received from the sale of energy and recovered materials) as allowed by Minnesota Statute. The Land Trust encourages landowners to fully or partially donate the value of conservation easements. This is a conservative estimate.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable? - Yes

Tell us how this project would be scaled and how administrative costs are affected, describe the "economy of scale" and how outputs would change with reduced funding, if applicable:

Because this program endeavors to protect multiple parcels with this funding, it is scalable. Administrative costs are somewhat fixed, creating an economy of scale to doing more projects under one appropriation. Less funding will result in fewer protected, restored, and enhanced acres, and opportunities lost to development.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	200	200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	512	512
Enhance	0	0	0	50	50
Total	0	0	0	762	762

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$648,000	\$648,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,195,000	\$4,195,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$157,000	\$157,000
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	200	0	0	0	0	200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	512	0	0	0	0	512
Enhance	50	0	0	0	0	50
Total	762	0	0	0	0	762

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$648,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$648,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$4,195,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,195,000
Enhance	\$157,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$157,000
Total	\$5,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,240
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$8,193
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,140

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$3,240	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$8,193	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$3,140	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

I have read and understand Section 15 of the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Statute 97A.056, and the Call for Funding Request. I certify I am authorized to submit this proposal and to the best of my knowledge the information provided is true and accurate.

Parcel List

Explain the process used to select, rank and prioritize the parcels:

Please see attached sign-up criteria summary.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

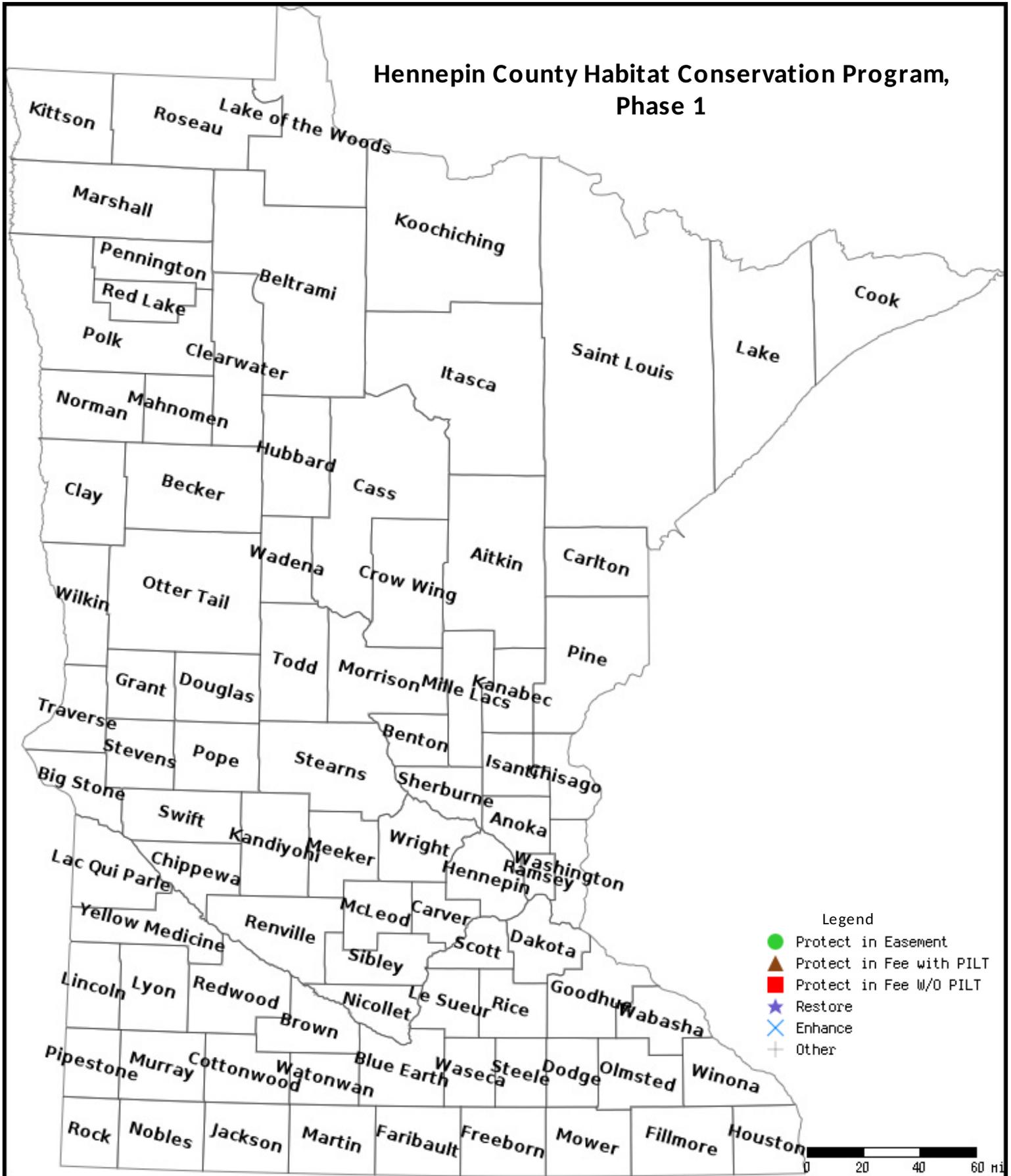
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program, Phase 1



Data Generated From Parcel List

Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program

An opportunity to permanently protect critical habitat threatened by development

Hennepin County is seeking \$5 million to permanently protect 512 acres of the most unique and important natural areas remaining in the county through the establishment of conservation easements. Grant funding will also be used to restore and enhance 250 acres of habitat.

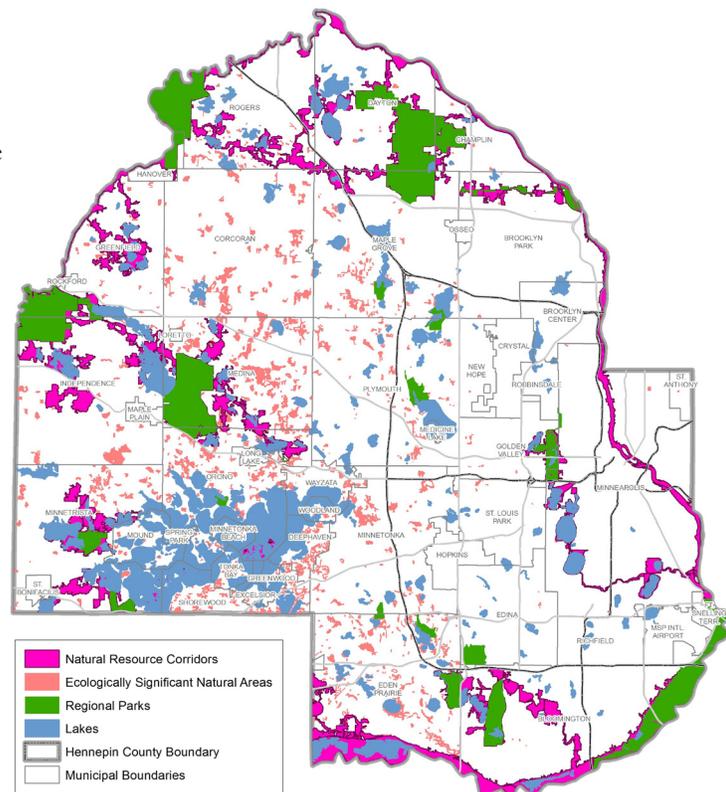
This grant will enable the county to implement its newly established conservation easement framework and make it easier and faster for landowners to access financial support. This program will permanently protect a diversity of habitats, including Big Woods forest, oak savanna, native tallgrass prairie, wetlands, lakeshores, and riparian areas. This would be the first grant awarded through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund focused on the protection of land in Hennepin County.

Time is running out to protect these natural areas

The remaining natural areas in Hennepin County are facing increasing pressure as more land becomes developed, making it critical to protect these areas now. The Twin Cities metro area is rapidly losing critical, high-quality and diverse habitat for wildlife such as migrating waterfowl, canopy-dwelling birds, game birds, game fish, amphibians and a variety of plant and insect species.

The county is ready to act on newly established priorities and framework

Over the past 15 years, Hennepin County inventoried its land cover and the quality of its natural communities using Minnesota Land Cover Classification System methods. From this process, ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors were designated. In 2016, the county board approved a conservation easement program that established a framework for evaluating natural areas for protection. Now in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust, the county is poised to take a systematic approach to protecting these priority areas. This work will use the Minnesota Land Trust's proven RFP approach to identify the best, most cost-effective opportunities to protect these remaining natural areas.



Conservation easements are a critical tool for protecting habitat

Several state plans identify conservation easements as a critical tool for supporting fish, game and wildlife populations. Additionally, landowners have expressed interest in alternatives to development for their land. But until now, the county did not have an established framework for evaluating easement opportunities, and funding for landowners has not been easy to access.

Project partners

- Hennepin County is responsible for the delivery of conservation programs and services as the Soil and Water Conservation District for the county. The county will manage this program, work to build interest among landowners, and manage habitat restoration and enhancement projects.
- Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally accredited land trust that monitors, manages and enforces more than 500 conservation easements throughout the state. Minnesota Land Trust will be responsible for negotiating the purchase of conservation easements and ongoing monitoring and enforcement.

Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust have a strong history of successful partnership and will collaborate closely on this project. The county and the land trust will work together on conducting communications and outreach, developing an RFP, reviewing and ranking applications, procuring and co-holding easements, and implementing restoration projects.

Alignment with Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund priorities

The project aligns well with the following priorities of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund for the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section:

- Ensure long-term health and viability of Minnesota's wildlife by permanently protecting habitats.
- Protect a network of natural lands by adding to the amount of protected habitat in the county, increasing connectivity between already protected habitats, and improving the quality of existing habitat.
- Increase opportunities for recreation and observation of a variety of wildlife species, including several Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

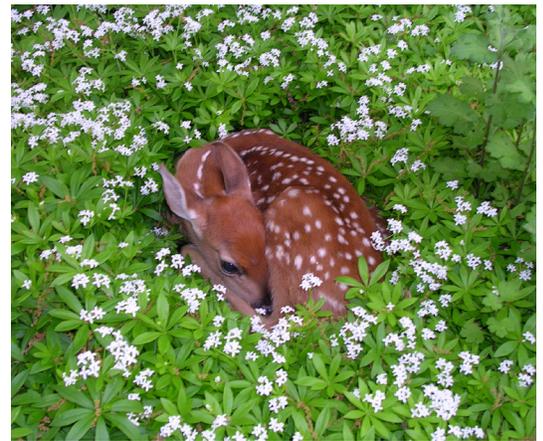
The \$5 million invested by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage fund will leverage:

- More than \$600,000 in cash and staff time from Hennepin County toward outreach and long-term stewardship of conservation easements.
- Donations of the appraised value of the conservation easements by landowners, estimated at \$372,000, which will be encouraged during negotiations of conservation easements.
- Restoration assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association.

For more information, contact Karen Galles at Karen.Galles@hennepin.us or David Thill at David.Thill@hennepin.us



Restored tallgrass prairie in Medina



A fawn sleeping on a bed of forest wildflowers in Dayton



Maple-basswood forest in the Mississippi River gorge



Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program

Conservation easement selection criteria

The Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program is a partnership between Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust that protects the best remaining wildlife habitat within the county's ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors. This program will work with willing landowners to secure conservation easements that protect the county's forests, wetlands, grasslands, and riparian and shoreland areas and the wildlife that rely on these habitats. The program also enhances existing habitat and restores degraded habitat. Easements completed through this program will be co-held by Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust.

Through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, landowners within targeted priority areas will submit an application to participate in the program. Submitted projects will initially be scored on two primary factors: ecological significance and cost.

Ecological significance

The ecological significance of a property is determined through an analysis of three aspects:

- **Quantity:** The size of habitat and/or length of shoreline associated with a parcel and abundance of species of greatest conservation need and threatened and endangered species.
- **Quality:** The condition of the associated habitat and populations of species of greatest conservation need and threatened and endangered species
- **Landscape context:** The extent and condition of natural habitat surrounding the parcel, and the degree to which adjacent property has been protected.

Cost

Cost is determined by asking landowners to propose a price they would need to receive in order to agree to a conservation easement. This information is combined with an estimated and eventually appraised easement value. In project ranking, landowners willing to accept less than the appraised value of the easement are given additional credit because their donation makes the easement a more cost-effective conservation option.

Additional evaluation

The two primary factors of ecological significance and cost will inform an initial score that will be used to rank a proposed parcel relative to others. Subsequent discussions with each landowner participating in the RFP process will allow project partners to:

- Gain a better sense of the landowner's desires for and expected uses of the property
- Confirm the ecological condition of the habitat
- Evaluate the level of threat and urgency to protect the parcel.

These post-proposal evaluations may result in proposed parcels moving up or down on the list of ranked parcels.

Minimum criteria

Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust have set the following minimum criteria for inclusion into the program:

- The proposed easement area must be located within identified natural resource corridors and/or ecologically significant areas in Hennepin County.
- A maximum of 20 percent of the proposed easement area may be in agricultural use unless such areas are targeted for restoration. Consideration to exceed this cap may be warranted in certain circumstances.
- The proposed easement area must contain high-quality native plant communities (e.g., forests, prairies, woodlands, etc.), shoreland along rivers and streams, or rare and threatened species. Consideration may be given to land not containing high-quality areas if it is adjacent to critically important protected properties and restoration is a required element of the easement.
- The proposed easement area cannot be enrolled previously in permanent protection programs, such as the Reinvest in Minnesota program.

Additional requirements will be stipulated within each conservation easement agreement as it relates to the special characteristics of the land and the particular situation of the landowner.

Ranking and selection criteria

The ranking and selection system is informed by the ecological ranking framework used by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and nationally by the Natural Heritage Data Center Network. Using a ranking system that prioritizes projects based on ecological value and cost enables this program to secure conservation easements that protect Hennepin County's most critical wildlife resources in the most cost-effective way.

RFP evaluation framework

Initial ranking based on primary factors

Factors	Criteria	Units affected	Criteria weight factor	Score
Ecological significance				
Size/abundance of habitat protected by easement				
	Total acres of native plant community or extent of target feature within the proposed easement			
	Feet of shoreline to be protected by easement			
Diversity/quantity of natural resources to be protected by the easement				
	Average quality of existing native plant communities			
	Number and quality of rare species on the parcel and rarity of the species			
Landscape context				
	Location of parcel relative to biodiversity "hotspots" or priority areas delineated in conservation plans			
	Location of parcel relative to other conservation lands			
	Location of parcel relative to existing moderate-high quality native plant communities and degree of habitat fragmentation			
Cost				
	Bid amount (\$/acre)			
	Estimated donation value (\$/acre)			
Total score				

Additional evaluation based on discussion with landowner

Factors	Criteria	Units affected	Criteria weight factor	Score
Potential impacts by landowner				
Size/abundance of habitat protected by easement				
	Total acres of native plant community or extent of target feature impacted by retained rights or proposed actions if exercised			
Diversity/quantity of natural resources to be protected by the easement				
	Estimated potential impact on diversity/quality of native plant community or extent of target feature by retained rights or proposed actions if exercised			
	Estimated potential impact on number/quality of rare species resulting from retained rights or proposed actions if exercised			
External threats				
	Level of threat to the property			
Revised score				

